

## Various Reminiscences

On a certain day during the latter part of January, Kusanagi Godou made a visit to Area 3 in the Chiyoda ward.

His destination was the Sayanomiya residence. This mansion, belonging to the Sayanomiya family, was also an important facility for the History Compilation Committee. However, its master was not at home today.

Instead, Godou and two members of his circle were currently in the mansion's study.

"Are you heading back already, Seishuui?"

"Yeah. It's not good to be away from home for too long. It's better to show up at school once in a while."

"Rather than 'once in a while,' school is a place where you should be going every day."

Amakasu shrugged in response to Seishuui Ena's cheerful answer.

The premier Hime-Miko's life was normally supposed to be centered around Saitama prefecture's Chichibu city. After visiting Okutama for certain reasons yesterday, she had spent the night in Tokyo and was about to return home. As a special agent of the History Compilation Committee, Amakasu Touma was responsible for driving her back.

Godou intended to have a casual chat before she went home, but her exchange with Amakasu prompted him to think of something by chance.

"Perhaps it's something that only occurred to me now, can I ask a question? What high school do you go to in the first place, Seishuui?"

Seishuui Ena was always wearing an unknown uniform. Godou had heard that it was her high school's uniform.

However, Ena regularly left civilization because she needed to purify her body and mind frequently, deep in the mountains. Naturally, she was unable to attend school every day.

This was basically the "I'll go to school whenever I have time" kind of attitude that high school students should not have.

Godou had heard that the school pursued a policy of tolerance towards this type of outrageous attendance in fear of the overwhelming influence wielded by the Seishuui family.

Ena's family was a prestigious house in the Japanese wizardry circles, a family with a military tradition that counted generals from the Warring States era among their ancestors.

The bright and cheerful Hime-Miko was actually a highly sheltered "ultimate Yamato Nadeshiko."

"It's a very small school in the mountains of Gunma. Chichibu... is located inside the boundaries of Saitama prefecture. Even if you drove at full speed, it takes about an hour to reach the nearest city."

"So students really are able to attend school properly in that kind of place."

Godou asked Ena another question while she giggled.

"I suppose there won't be transportation like trains of course. Are there any school buses there?"

"No, none of that at all. People from town basically get to school by walking or biking. Those who had enough of that would move into the dorms in the mountains. But Ena was basically driven by car most of the time."

"Well, the majority of students do choose to live in the dorms..."

Amakasu muttered with a slightly bitter expression.

"Although called a nearby 'town,' it's basically just a rural town deep in the mountains after all. It doesn't even have a convenience store."

"Apart from the small grocery store Grandma runs, there are no other shops."

"Sealing high school students away deep in the mountains for three years, right when they're easily drawn to having fun, this is all done to isolate them from all entertainment so that they may focus on their studies. That school is literally like a tiger's den."

"Ahaha. Speaking of which, Amakasu-san also graduated from that type of school, right?"

"Eh?"



Godou was quite surprised by this unexpected piece of new information.

"Amakasu-san, you also studied in that crazy kind of deep mountain school too?"

"Yeah. It was a private school funded by the History Compilation Committee. The school was established to accept members of the Seishuuin, Sayanomiya, Renjou and Kuhoudzuka families or young adults with certain magical or martial arts abilities, allowing them to become agents or staff of the Committee after they graduate."

"Basically, it's similar to Railway High or the National Defense Academy of Japan?"

"Something like that. However, the school's actual situation is more like..."

In stark contrast to Ena's happy smiling, Amakasu was still making a bitter expression.

"Heard of the Nakano School?"

"I think it's a school that was used specially during the war to train spies, right?"

"I guess I don't need to ask that it's no Shaolin Temple?"

"Of course."

"What about Mount Kouya?"

"That just reminds me of stuff that appears in manga. I don't know the details very much."

"Oh well, roughly one third of that area consists of similar educational facilities."

Amakasu's explanation seemed to make sense but was still incomprehensible.

"Because it's basically a place used for training subordinates for related organizations, the tradition was that only the Four Families and various Hime-Miko would enroll. But nowadays, it's completely different."

"Ahaha, well, about that."

Despite the subtly critical gaze coming from the special agent who called himself a subordinate, Ena continued to speak cheerfully, completely unfazed.

"The various Hime-Miko study in so-called 'prestigious' schools so it's quite difficult to request that they adjust attendance requirements. But over in the mountains, it's much less troublesome, all it takes is for Grandma to ask for a favor."

"As an upper-class daughter, why don't you just attend Lilian Girls' Academy properly?"

Amakasu groaned mournfully as a low-ranked member of the organization.

As usual, Ena ignored these words and changed the subject by going "Oh right, by the way."

"Speaking of attendance, you haven't shown up at the Swordfighting Association lately, Amakasu-san? The guys over there said so, asking Ena to drag you there by force this time."

"Th-Those are quite some sudden and outrageous words."

"Swordfighting Association?"

"It's an association devoted to martial arts training for History Compilation Committee members in the capital region as well as officers in the police and JSDF who have contact with 'that area.' It's like club activities or something. Ena always makes sure to attend when visiting Tokyo every time."

Ena explained to Godou who was puzzled by an unfamiliar term.

'That area' meant people who frequently dealt with things like wizardry and gods.

"Please don't talk about that kind of dangerous gathering as you would describe a dessert club, okay?"

Amakasu sighed while grumbling.

"That gathering takes place in a training hall with bamboo swords that are decorated super fashionably with pitch black tips. That threshold is really too high for a weak and cultured man like me."

"Why is it pitch black?"



"The front of that type of bamboo sword is equipped with a 'blade' made from hard sharkskin. If you get hit by a thrust, that thing stabs right into the body."

"...Bamboo sword?"

"Yes. Despite being a bamboo sword, it can pierce the human body. The pitch black color are the stains left behind from dried blood."

"...So they don't wear stuff like protective gear?"

"Even wearing it doesn't provide complete protection for the body. Particularly dangerous is the special move that attacks the lower jaw while simultaneously delivering a fatal stab to the throat. Besides, even with bamboo swords, blows on the protective gear can still fracture skulls and rupture eardrums."

"..."

Godou could easily imagine tragic scenes just from these brief descriptions. However, even as a girl who frequently took part in these gatherings, Ena remained cheerful as always.

"Well, that's basically what so-called kendo is supposed to be about. Not only limited to attacking each other with bamboo swords but also using leg locks, kicks and body slams. Weapons like the naginata are also used sometimes too."

"At least I've never heard of that kind of kendo..."

"It dates back to before the war. Somehow, it became mixed together with jujutsu. It's a product of the cruelty during the Meiji, Taishou and early Shouwa periods when bloodshed and physical punishment can be laughed off as jokes."

While explaining, Amakasu made another bitter expression.

"After the war and Japan's defeat, under General Headquarter's orders, excessively dangerous Japanese martial arts were substantially toned down. However, the History Compilation Committee back then had several dozen experts in that area as martial arts instructors."

"So those people founded the association that Seishuun mentioned?"

"Yes. I believe the core consisted of masters originally belonging under the Metropolitan Police Department. Did you know? Forced to disarm by the Meiji Restoration's ban on swords, the majority of accomplished swordsmen became police officers."

"That's not for the sake of using swords in battle, right?"

"Probably something similar to providing martial arts training to police officers all over the country. Back then, swordsmen acting as instructors were known as 'Gekken Sewakakari.' Because they were unable to make a living elsewhere, rivalries between the Hokushin-Ittouryuu and the Jikishin-Kageryuu sword schools were finally set aside when hiring talent..."

Godou stared wide-eyed in response to the profound story Amakasu brought up from his wide knowledge.

"In the end, over excessive martial spirit and techniques dating from before the war were inherited directly and passed down the Swordfighting Association. I really wish they could be considerate for the people who are being forced to participate."

"How should I say this? My condolences..."

"Don't worry, there's no problem. Besides, Amakasu-san is actually quite strong."

"Please don't summarize things in such a careless manner. More than 60% of the participants in the Association are much stronger than me. You can't say there's no problem at all."

Godou still felt he could understand why Amakasu did not want to participate in the Swordfighting Association.

Furthermore, he was reminded of something. At the garden party at the end of last year, there was a group of people acquainted with Ena and looked like martial artists. Surely, they must be members of this Swordfighting Association.

"Seishuun... aside, I never thought that Amakasu-san went through the same kind of trials..."

Godou muttered with heartfelt emotion.

"Life sure is tough for students studying at schools in the deep mountains."

"Oh well, it's quite easy to deal with once you're used to it."

"Speaking of which, Amakasu-san, were you a high school student when you first met Kaoru-san?"

"Roughly that time. I remember I had just graduated from that place and becoming a university student in Tokyo. Oh well, in any case, my life was dramatically turned upside down ever since encountering her."

Amakasu shrugged as he answered Ena's additional remark.

"Back in my student days, my dream was to get a well-paid job involving little work on my part."

"Don't go calling that kind of plan a dream. However, I can understand in various ways. As expected, for someone like Amakasu-san who works in this kind of special occupation, there was a past experience that differs from an 'ordinary person.'"

Everyone had a past. In response to the mutters of Godou's heartfelt reaction, Amakasu began to make a wry expression for some reason.

"For you to make such a comment, Kusanagi-san, shouldn't you have an even more colorful past instead?"

"What are you talking about? My past is extremely ordinary, that of an elementary and middle schooler you can find anywhere off the street. I've never gone through any 'training' like Erica, Seishuuin or the others."

Since childhood, Ena and the girls had received an elite education in magic and martial arts.

Godou stated his position as a representative of ordinary people who did not go through such unusual childhoods.

"Sure. However, there's something that's bothered Ena for a while already."

Ena suddenly interjected.

"Despite Your Majesty constantly calling yourself 'ordinary,' Ena feels that you already became used to fighting very early on. Think about it, when Your Majesty first fought Verethragna, you kept exposing yourself to danger and finally, Your Majesty unbelievably faced off against the god of victory in a duel."

"..."

"Perhaps Your Majesty already became good at fighting a long time ago? From the first moment, Ena felt that Your Majesty could not be underestimated even ignoring the Campione matter."

"W-What are you talking about, Seishuuin? I've always been a pacifist since a long time ago."

Of course, Godou instantly expressed denial—Or rather, he omitted the precise wording, because it involved matters he did not wish to touch upon.

Kusanagi Godou. Height: 180cm. Tall physique since a long time ago. By middle school, he was already a relatively famous baseball player and often called the fourth hitter who held the key to victory. Even now, he still remained confident in his dynamic vision that allowed him to track fast balls. Definitely not muscle-bound all over, but suitable parts of his body such as his back and arms were quite thoroughly trained...

Through experience, Godou had come to know how he could make effective use of these physical characteristics in certain situations, including rather regrettable cases.

Indeed. For example, during his middle school days, there was one time when his baseball team went on an excursion for a training camp.

His rather simple-minded longtime friend, Miura, the talented pitcher, had gotten into a conflict with local delinquents.

Under those conditions, bringing Miura back to camp by all means necessary became Godou's mission.

First of all, he had to apply appropriate force to calm down the raging Miura. Next, in order to escape from the local delinquents whose anger remained unappeased, a slight amount of counterattacking was necessary as dictated by the circumstances. To avoid leaving lingering problems behind, he also had to take care in concealing his own identity...

Godou continued in his attempt to wander his maze of memories.

He realized that there were actually quite a number of similar incidents.

Godou coughed drily once.

"Well, so that's that. There are also times when I temporarily put pacifism aside, but for me to voluntarily abandon pacifism proactively—I don't think that could possibly happen."

"Here you go again. Clearly there's never a shred of hesitation whenever an emergency arises."

"L-Let's put aside the truthfulness of that for now."

Ena giggled as usual while Amakasu smiled as though he were about to say "This is known from all sorts of investigations."

"From what I've heard, Kusanagi-san, you were quite a famous baseball player. Like being chosen to represent Japan and heading to compete overseas in Taiwan."

"I wasn't representing Japan, just regions like Tokyo or Kantou."

Because Godou was perfectly comfortable with this portion of his past, he recounted rather fluently.

"Members were chosen from junior baseball leagues to form the Kyushu Team, the Hokkaido Team, the Tohoku Team, etc, to participate in an international tournament. Though seriously, I guess representing Japan wasn't totally a delusion."

Due to recalling these insignificant achievements, Godou smiled wryly while he spoke.

In actual fact, a team had been assembled to represent Japan at the U15 World Baseball Tournament.

However, Japan gave up participating due to political instability in the host nation.

There were far too many nostalgic memories.

"Perhaps I was more talented than the average person, but back in my baseball days, I really was just an ordinary player you could find anywhere. Please don't bring up weird things."

"Eh, you're asking about Godou back in his baseball days?"

In response to Liliana's question, Tokunaga Asuka went "hmm" and entered deep thought.

The current location was the cafe along Hongou Street where Kusanagi Godou lived. Seeing her sitting at an open air table, Liliana invited Asuka to join her.

Asuka happened to be having coffee while browsing a magazine.

This was a general sports magazine centered on interviews of athletes. Because the cover happened to feature a baseball player, Liliana suddenly brought up the question she had just asked.

What kind of player was Kusanagi Godou who competed in this sport in the past?

"Precisely because it's him, naturally, you can't call him an ordinary player."

"Putting it that way is definitely correct."

"Well, I don't really know much about the technical aspects, but very clearly, he definitely did not give off an impression of 'a baseball youth you could find anywhere' for sure."

Sitting face to face with Liliana, Asuka spoke with a bored expression.

"Basically this. He's like the kind of villain you find in baseball manga."

"...Why do you say that?"

"Despite clearly capable of winning recognition through ability alone, he gives off an impression with a fatal lack of openness. Although Godou was still only a middle schooler, he already mastered how to play baseball with his smarts, such as tempting the opposing team to target him in order to create openings, then using those openings to keep them in check, completely defeating the enemy's pitcher and batting lineup."

Kusanagi Godou was both the fourth hitter as well as the catcher who acted as the team's playmaker.

With a knowing tone of voice, Asuka told Liliana about his superb skills.

Judging from her liking for sports magazines, Asuka understood baseball more than average high school girls.

"Then there were the times when he had one-on-one matches against his rival, Miura-kun the pitcher. Although Godou always struck out on his first and second times at bat, he would never fail to start making spectacular hits by the third time, roughly. It makes me feel that his considerations use the entire match to defeat his opponent rather than individual times at bat."

He competed against the opponent by using smarts in addition to the body.



Indeed, this was a very interesting anecdote very much in Kusanagi Godou's style. Asuka continued:

"That guy doesn't put up much of a performance in the beginning of a match when there are no runners on base. But whenever the chance comes, he'll make a good hit to rack up the points. And then there's the habit of being strangely capable of manipulating the pitchers."

"Now that you mention it, indeed, there seems to be..."

With Erica Blandelli foremost of all, along with Seishuui Ena and Lu Yinghua.

Standing by the young Campione's side were all these geniuses with unbridled personalities.

Kusanagi Godou's ability to lead and have them follow instructions could very well be described as his hidden skill.

Recalling this, Liliana nodded once vigorously.

"Precisely because he was that kind of player, he was widely known and even selected to represent Tokyo and Kantou. However, Godou himself simply says 'people like me are a dime a dozen, right?' I know it's a frequent occurrence, but his self-portrayals have never been reliable at all."

Murmuring slightly indignantly, Tokunaga Asuka concluded her reminiscences.

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**Translated by: Baka-Tsuki**

**PDF Created by: Rwings**